

APRIL 3, 1980

The cattle market responded to President Carter's anti-inflation speech four days ahead of time. Cattle began deflating faster than money went up or the politicians' promises fell to the winds.

Here in the Shortgrass Country inflation had already crippled us six months ago. With sacked goods selling for \$186 a ton at the mill and No.4 coarse stemmed bedding straw going for two bucks a bale, all Mr. Carter contributed was an overkill.

He was too late to tell us about credit restraints. We were experiencing worse tight money than what he was talking about back when he was plebe at the Naval Academy.

As for high interest, the old grandpappies that took the herds to Dodge City had to trot their steers all the way up the trail because of high interest rates. In those times money was so hard to get and the bankers were so fierce that it's no wonder the trail bosses and drovers waded through the Indian Nations like those Apaches and Comanches were toy soldiers.

Putting a damper on consumer credit and credit cards hit us too late, also. After Christmas at Mertzon, I heard of a dozen housewives that were unable to find their credit cards. About three days after the billing date of the Visa and Master Charge cards, a lot of plastic money disappeared.

Over at my house, Child Who Sits in the Sun nearly wrecked the place looking for her cards. She's as bad as her white-eyed sisters about the January clearance sales. The hotter the bargain ads became in the newspaper, the more she searched. She dumped her money pouches out in the floor and ruined my burying suit jerking the pockets wrong side out.

It was like living in the midst of a big police raid. She grilled our sons and made the maid so mad that she threatened to quit. I started to call the Indian Bureau for advise. I think I would have if the phone hadn't been in such a tight corner.

Finally, to have any peace, I began to hunt for the credit cards. You're not going to believe this, but we found the silvered remains of plastic in a high powered food grinder that'd been sent as a Christmas gift.

Don't expect me an explanation from me. Things like that just happen. One time at the ranch we poured a pair of wire pliers out of a bucket of sheep branding paint. We don't know to this day how those pliers fell in the paint can. You sure can't blame the mice or the wet Mexicans for putting pliers in the branding paint. Wets always throw down the tools where they finish, and mice are highly allergic to branding paint.

I believe it was the longest quiet spell I ever saw her fall into. Late at night, I'd find her poking the wood in the fireplace and staring like she was in a trance. I tried saying all kinds of funny things at the meals, but she was in deep meditation. I don't think she knew I was in the house.

Then one afternoon I came in from the ranch to the sound of that ferocious grinder running in the kitchen. I think she grabbed me at the kitchen door. All I know is that in seconds my arms were pinned behind my back and she was propelling me across a wet floor right toward that grinder. She forced my head downward; if one or the other of

us hadn't tripped, I'd have been the first squaw man in history to be scarred by a food grinder.

So you can see that Mr. Carter isn't going to bother the Shortgrass Country. He's too late to hurt us. My arms still ache in the mornings. I sure am tired of being blamed for everything that happens at the house.